

cerned, the Webbs read it, when it came out in the pages of *The English Review*, with Spartan fortitude and a measure of perfectly genuine entertainment—hardly shared by others, who having laughed heartily at the picture of them, found their own successive portraits notably less funny. The affair made a great dust at the time they refused to be put out. When, nearly ten years later, Mr Wells sent them an early copy of *The Outline of History*, they at once wrote an acknowledgment full of warm praise of his work, which they have never ceased to think highly important.

If, between 1900 and 1909 they took no active part in politics, they were very busy indeed socially. Grosvenor Road was, in these years, a veritable focus of opinion. There were some people who did not enjoy their parties. There were some people who did not enjoy Mrs Webb. She could, and at times did, look her vivid expressive contempt at the merely social and this meant that there were a number of wives, at any given time, who did not greatly care for her. Men sometimes, but less often, heartily disliked Beatrice the men for whom her brains were too good, or her way of using them oppressive, they resented the way in which she "bore down"¹⁵ upon them. Something was lost, no doubt through the fact that some, of either sex, were definitely afraid of her. Those who got easily bored with discussion and preferred mere talk also found Grosvenor Road a bit of a strain the conversation was apt to be on one note, and to be terribly well-informed it was also constantly tending to degenerate into the useful. None of

